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Letter dated 27 December 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to my second report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2016. In the report, I recommend that the mandate of UNOWAS be extended for a period of three years, from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2019.

I have attached hereto the proposed mandate for UNOWAS, which sets out its core functions (see annex). These mandated tasks are to be implemented in close collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union, the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union and other regional and subregional partners.

The proposed mandate is in line with the request of the Security Council, on 28 January 2016 (see S/2016/89), to proceed with the merger of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel "with a view to maximizing synergies by ensuring a unified management and structure of the new United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel". It also takes into consideration the main findings of the independent evaluation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which was conducted in October and November 2016 in response to the call of the Security Council for further progress towards the implementation of the strategy (see S/2016/89). In addition, it reflects the achievements of the Office over the past three years, as well as the evolving political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in West Africa and the Sahel.

Since 2014, my Special Representative has extended my good offices in countries that have witnessed political transitions and elections. In 2015, he co-chaired, with representatives from the African Union and ECOWAS, the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso. In close collaboration with ECOWAS, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the European Union, France and the United States of America, he helped to broker the Inter-Guinean Political Agreement of 20 August 2015. He also helped to organize the first high-level ECOWAS-African Union-United Nations mission to the Gambia in May 2016, ahead of the presidential election on 1 December 2016.

UNOWAS has focused on supporting national political dialogue processes as well as national and regional mechanisms for the prevention of electoral violence, in

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particular during the 2015 general elections in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. In coordination with regional and international partners, UNOWAS has helped to defuse tensions by supporting peaceful electoral processes and constitutional reforms and promoting good governance, including in Benin and Niger in 2016. These efforts have led to improvements in democratic processes in West Africa and the Sahel, including peaceful elections in Benin, Cabo Verde, Guinea, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo, as well as the establishment of a democratically elected leadership in Burkina Faso.

In the past three years, terrorist activities perpetrated by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, and terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) in Mali and in the broader Sahel, have constituted immediate and urgent challenges. Linkages between terrorist and trafficking networks amid weak State structures have further undermined governance. In his capacity as my High-level Representative to Nigeria, my Special Representative engaged closely with the Nigerian authorities on the fight against Boko Haram and supported the efforts of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in response to the dire humanitarian situation in the north-east of the country. He has advocated the release, rehabilitation and reintegration of hostages, including the Chibok girls, for additional humanitarian access in the north-east of Nigeria and for enhanced regional cooperation against the insurgency. Since January 2015, my Special Representative has conducted a total of nine visits to Boko Haram-affected countries to encourage enhanced coordination among Multinational Joint Task Force troop contributors.

My Special Representative also supported the operationalization of the West Africa Coast Initiative, a joint United Nations-International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) programme that aims to fight transnational crime in the region. On maritime security, UNOWAS, along with the Economic Community of Central African States, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, contributed to the development of an integrated regional maritime strategy to fight piracy, armed robbery and related illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea, which culminated in the inauguration of the Interregional Coordination Centre in September 2014 in Yaoundé. In addition, UNOWAS supported the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy, which was adopted in March 2014.

UNOWAS has continued to enhance coordination among United Nations entities, notably within the framework of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, and has strengthened partnerships with regional organizations, including in the areas of addressing violent extremism, security sector reform, maritime security, gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention efforts, and good governance. Between 2014 and 2016, UNOWAS and ECOWAS trained 180 women leaders in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone in peace mediation and negotiation. UNOWAS assisted the Mano River Union in the development of the strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union in 2013, and has since been supporting its implementation. In 2016, UNOWAS continued to support security sector reform in Guinea and helped to plan United Nations support in the areas of security sector reform and national reconciliation in Burkina Faso in the context of the "sustaining peace" approach. UNOWAS also worked closely with the Group of Five for the Sahel, including in support of the

operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel Regional Cell to Fight Radicalization and the Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre.

UNOWAS has worked closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in support of the work of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa, a platform established in 2009 to promote collaboration among civil society organizations, United Nations entities and other concerned stakeholders in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. Between 2014 and 2016, the Office facilitated 30 meetings of the Working Group and helped to establish links with the Sahel Women Platform, which was created in 2015. In support of peaceful elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Togo, UNOWAS supported the establishment of Women's Situation Rooms for electoral observation, violence monitoring, early warning and early response.

UNOWAS has continued to engage in liaison with the United Nations human rights field presences in the region to exchange views on the human rights situation and take action to help address human rights and rule of law challenges at the regional level. This has included organizing capacity-building workshops on human rights challenges related to cross-border security and electoral dispute management for regional civil society organizations, as well as a regional awareness-raising workshop on the Human Rights Up Front initiative, in cooperation with the regional office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In the next three years, the region of West Africa and the Sahel will continue to require support from UNOWAS, in coordination with other concerned United Nations entities, in consolidating democratic and human rights processes and in addressing challenges to peace and security. In view of the drawdown of the peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, UNOWAS has identified priority activities that should be further sustained in collaboration with the respective United Nations country teams, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund. UNOWAS will need to scale up efforts to ensure the holding of credible elections in Liberia and Sierra Leone, support a peaceful transition in both countries and strengthen democratic institutions in Guinea and Togo. The Office will continue to provide strategic leadership to the United Nations system for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Moreover, UNOWAS will strengthen its support for the coordination of the various Sahel strategies, including by providing continued support to the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and its Technical Secretariat, as well as to the Group of Five for the Sahel. Finally, it is anticipated that the demand for good offices and support for regional initiatives to address cross-border challenges in West Africa and the Sahel will remain high and require continuous attention from UNOWAS, including in the Mano River Basin, the Gulf of Guinea, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex to the letter dated 27 December 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Proposed mandate for the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Objective 1

Monitor political developments in West Africa and the Sahel and carry out good offices and special assignments on behalf of the Secretary-General, to help sustain peace and enhance subregional capacities for inclusive conflict prevention and mediation in the countries of West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 1.1

Monitor and analyse the situation in West Africa and the Sahel, in particular emerging threats to peace, and provide the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and regional and subregional organizations and national Governments with early warning and recommendations for preventive action.

Function 1.2

Perform good offices roles in West African countries to prevent conflict, help sustain peace and consolidate peacebuilding efforts and political stability.

Function 1.3

Enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention, conflict management, mediation and good offices in West Africa and the Sahel, paying particular attention to the women and peace and security agenda, and including providing support to existing subregional mechanisms.

Function 1.4

Facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice ruling of 10 October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Objective 2

Enhance subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, in particular election-related instability and challenges related to security sector reform, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking, violent extremism and terrorism.

Function 2.1

Raise awareness of and promote integrated subregional and cross-border responses to potential problems and emerging threats to peace, human security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 2.2

Support the development of networks of practitioners and subregional frameworks and mechanisms to address challenges related to security sector reform, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism.

Function 2.3

Facilitate systematic and regular linkages in the work of the United Nations system within the region to promote a coherent and synergetic United Nations approach to addressing the root causes of instability and conflict in West Africa and the Sahel.

Objective 3
Support the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the coordination of international and regional engagements in the Sahel.

Function 3.1

Provide strategic leadership to the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel under its three strategic goals, namely, governance, security and resilience.

Function 3.2

Contribute to efforts aimed at sustaining international engagement in support of the Sahel, and help coordinate the various Sahel strategies, including by providing continued support to the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and its Technical Secretariat, as well as to the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Function 3.3

Support and promote enhanced regional cooperation for the fulfilment of the objectives of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Objective 4
Promote good governance and respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender into conflict prevention and management initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 4.1

Facilitate the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices among national Governments, regional organizations, civil society and other entities for the promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, gender equality, women's participation and leadership and the improvement of electoral processes.

Function 4.2

Provide support for the enactment of resolutions and frameworks of action pertaining to respect for human rights in conflict prevention and conflict management initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 4.3

Provide support to national Governments, regional organizations and civil society to incorporate a gender perspective into conflict prevention and conflict management initiatives, as recognized in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, youth, peace and security.